

**STICTOPLEURUS PUNCTATONERVOSUS (GOEZE, 1778)
(HEM.: RHOPALIDAE) REDISCOVERED IN BRITAIN
AND NEW TO ESSEX**

J.P. BOWDREY

Colchester Museums, 14, Ryegate Road, Colchester CO1 1YG.

WHILST VACUUM-SAMPLING for invertebrates at the Moors, Colchester (OS grid reference TM 0124) with Nigel Cuming on 17.vii.1997 an unfamiliar heteropteran was taken on dry, sparsely vegetated ground near to the River Colne. On the 23.ix.1997 a second example was aspirated from bare, sandy ground at West Bergholt Heath, West Bergholt, Essex (TL 9527). Both sites are in Vice-County 19 – North Essex.

The specimens were clearly Rhopalids and that from West Bergholt was duly sent to the Essex Heteroptera Recorder, Peter Kirby, for his opinion. He determined it as *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus* (Goeze), apparently the first example of this species to be found in Britain since 1870. A third example was taken at West Mersea (TM 0012) on 30.vii.1998.

Species of the genus *Stictopleurus* are rarely encountered in Britain, there being authenticated British specimens of *S. punctatonervosus* with data, from Charlwood, Surrey (1860, 1869, 1870) and Holm Bush, Sussex (1869) which were examined by Dolling (1978), who also cited records from Kent and Essex (Massee, 1955) which were not supported by specimens. The Essex record, however, was based on a misidentification of *Rhopalus subrufus* collected near Chelmsford in June 1950 by J.H. Flint (Kirby, 1997). It would appear, therefore, that the two 1997 specimens are the first for Essex and the first British examples for over 120 years.

Both of the new Essex sites are dry and sparsely vegetated. The Moors is an area beside the River Colne which has been used in the past for the dumping of industrial waste, including large quantities of casting sand, whilst West Bergholt Heath is a remnant of a formerly more extensive tract of heathland.

The appearance of *S. punctatonervosus* for the first time at two sites within four miles of one another, in the same year, is difficult to explain other than by immigration from the Continent or from an as yet undiscovered population elsewhere in Britain. It is interesting to note that a second species of *Stictopleurus*, *S. abutilon*, has established breeding populations in the south of England in recent years and was recorded as new to Essex in 1996 (Kirby, *op. cit.*).

The author would be interested to hear of any other recent records of *Stictopleurus* species in Britain.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Peter Kirby for identifying *S. punctatonervosus* and for helpful comments and Nigel Cuming and Colchester Natural History Society for the use of the vacuum sampler.

References

- Dolling, W.R., 1978. The British species of *Stictopleurus* Stal (Hemiptera: Rhopalidae). *Entomologist's Gazette* 29: 261-263.

- Kirby, P., 1992. *A review of the scarce and threatened Hemiptera of Great Britain*. UK Nature Conservation, number 2. JNCC: Peterborough.
- , 1997. Essex Heteroptera report for 1996. *Essex Naturalist* 14 (New Series): 18-20.
- Massee, A.M., 1955. The county distribution of the British Hemiptera-Heteroptera. Second edition. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* 91: 7-27.
-
-

The 1998 season in my Cambridge garden

The year started with the sighting of a Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* (L.) on 3 April and was followed by regular sightings of Orange-tips *Anthocharis cardamines* (L.) until the end of May. This species breeds regularly in the garden and caterpillars were again noticed this year. From mid-May onwards until mid-September both the smaller whites (*Pieris rapae* (L.) and *P. napi* (L.)) were common, in that at any time of day several were usually present in the garden, with *P. napi* out-numbering *P. rapae* by about 5 to 1 in the early broods, but by late summer they were in equal numbers. The Large White *P. brassicae* (L.) also occurred in small numbers; certainly more numerous than in the past few years but nothing like so common as the smaller *Pieris* species.

The Holly Blues *Celastrina argiolus* (L.) had an excellent season, not only being plentiful in both first and second broods, but a third brood example was noted on 14 October.

At the beginning of September a Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) took possession of my garden, basing itself by the pear tree and several times when I was near this tree I was “buzzed” as I had clearly invaded its territory. From time to time it was seen patrolling or sunning itself either up at the house or on the fence or shed at the bottom of the garden and its territory clearly also took in the neighbour’s garden on one side. It was seen several times in October feeding on the orange globe buddleia *Buddleja globosa* which had decided to have a second flowering of the season and was last seen on 11 November when it spent about 30 minutes sunning itself on the shed.

At the bottom of the garden there is a 40 or 50 year old Christmas tree *Picea abies*, now taller than the house and in September either from it, or aphids feeding on it (possibly an *Adelges* species), was dropping a rain of sticky substance onto the mixed vegetation below which became sticky and dirty, including the ivy which envelopes the trunk and is halfway up it. From early September onwards, from dawn to dusk, dull, rain or sunny, warm or cold, there were large numbers of wasps (which I identified from three specimens as *Vespula germanica* (L.) enjoying collecting up this largesse and when it was warmer and sunnier they were joined by a number of Diptera (blowflies and houseflies). The autumn moths did not have a chance to enjoy the ivy blossom as it too was swarming with the wasps. When this blossom was exhausted towards the end of October they turned their attention to the other ivy blossom which was out near the house end of the garden and had come later into flower. The wasp nest was not located, but was not in my garden although shavings from my shed had clearly been used in its construction as wasps had earlier been seen *in flagrante* rasping at the wood and all the little scrapes they made are very